DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 237 176 JC 830 841

AUTHOR Husmann, Ann
TITLE Class Guests...An Added Dimension.
PUB DATE 21 Oct 83
NOTE 4p.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)
JOURNAL CIT Innovation Abstracts; v5 n30 Oct 21, 1983

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Instruction; *Community Resources; Discussion (Teaching Technique); Educational Resources; *Human Resources; Information Sources; Instructional Improvement; Postsecondary Education; Student Behavior; Student Responsibility; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS PF Project

ABSTRACT

Inviting carefully selected guests into the classroom can help students recognize the blending of theory and practice and involve students more intimately in the learning process. For example, a first-person account by a mother of a handicapped child might have a greater impact on the listener than books, films, or lectures. Effective presentations, however, require advance planning. Students are given a time-line at the beginning of the semester on which they may sign up if they choose to invite a guest. An outline enumerating class and guest responsibilities, a conference with the instructor, and a written outline for the guest must be completed before the invitation is finalized. Students complete the project with a summary, personal evaluation of the presentation, thank-you note, and final discussion. Instructor-invited guests are usually experts at what they are asked to talk about, e.g., an insurance agent or a member of La Leche League. Often, guests can provide a link to the job market and can give particulars useful to students. (LH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED237176

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

X Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Karen Watkins

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CLASS GUESTS . . . AN ADDED DIMENSION

By
Ann Husmann
El Camino College
California

October 21, 1983

JC 830 841

From: Innovation Abstracts, Vol. V, No. 30
National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development
The University of Texas at Austin

INNOVATION ABSTRACTS

VOL. V
NO. 30

Published by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development
With support from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation

CLASS GUESTS . . . AN ADDED DIMENSION

Although I was rather timid years ago about having outsiders in my classroom, I slowly discovered the advantages of inviting carefully selected guests for certain topics. Guests can help students to recognize the blending of theory and practice. The selection of guests can also involve students more intimately in the learning process. Although some of our guests are instructor-invited, others come at the suggestion of students.

For example, one Wednesday evening a mother of nine children visited my course entitled "Survey of Exceptional Children." Invited by one daughter, a student in the class, the mother brought along another adult daughter who has suffered epileptic seizures since infancy; due to severe nerve damage she cannot read or write or even understand simple mathematical concepts. After the mother shared that she had never spoken to a group of any size before, she related her very personal experiences in raising a handicapped child. Stereotypes disappeared as her story unfolded. Books, films or a lecture could never replace the twenty minutes it took to tell the story! More details rounded out the picture during the ten-minute question and answer period which followed. The class soon became aware that the affected daughter had become a functioning and contributing member of society because of the special care she had received as a youngster and that this parent was as tuned in to the needs of handicapped children as every other person in the room studying the subject theoretically.

A first person, in-the-flesh account can make a great impact on the listener. During an evaluation session held directly after our guests left, students declared that they had been touched by the lives of this family who lived with a special problem. Class members expressed amazement at the inner strength of the mother of this family. It was only as she walked out the door that we realized something we had failed to notice at the beginning of her presentation. We had been so involved with her story that we had not noticed her own struggle to walk: her body was severely disabled.

A couple of things happened which are worth mentioning. Although we had discussed appropriate reactions to guests before any were invited, it became evident to class members that talking about behavior and actually reacting to an uncomfortable situation are two different things. When our guests arrived, some class members were amused by the younger guest's trying to decide where to sit. But the laughter of awkwardness and discomfort quickly gave way to kind attention as class members recognized what their behavior signaled. They realized that although one of our guests might carry the societal label of "retarded," this individual could still pick up on feelings and attitudes. Soon class members laughed with and not at our guest.

Having guests make an effective presentation requires advance planning. Students are given a time-line at the beginning of the semester with dates and appropriate topics listed. If they choose to invite a guest, they may sign up for a tentative date. They are given an outline which enumerates responsibilities to both the class and the intended guest. A conference with the instructor and a written outline for the guest must be completed before the invitation is finalized. Students complete the project with a summary and a personal evaluation of the presentation

Follow-up after the guest has visited generally includes sending a thank-you note and having the class discuss the presentation. As students recognize the benefits of listening to guests, they ferret out new sources of information and sometimes ask to bring in other guests.

Instructor-invited guests are usually experts at what they are asked to talk about. An insurance agent gives playground presentations in "Introduction to Nursery School Administration." His well-chosen slides illustrate which kinds of playground equipment should be avoided when designing or remodeling a nursery school play yard. Former students talk about his lecture and pictures years later.

Mothers from La Leche League have come to my Child Development and Infant Development courses. They share the benefits of breast feeding. Students are always impressed with this experience because it gives them an opportunity to watch the uniqueness of the relationship between the accompanying children and their mothers. These youngsters usually show remarkable independence and self-sufficiency and play quietly while their mothers address the students.

Interesting attitudes sometimes emerge which might not otherwise be evident. When I mentioned to one class that I was inviting a guest who has developed a new method of working with hearing-impaired children, two students told me that they were ready to challenge the person's methods. It was a good opportunity to discuss the benefits of making fair judgments by keeping an open mind and listening carefully to what is being presented. At the completion of a presentation, questions and ideas can be clarified. Students might not agree with our guest, but at least they have been exposed to an alternative or two.

Some of our most successful guest presentations have been paired with a class potluck lunch or supper. Last semester three disabled El Camino students were invited to share their experiences at one of these sessions. After the initial discomfort wore off, class members were able to relax and mingle with our guests each of whom had a visual, hearing or motor impairment. Our guests later shared that because of the warmth and caring generated by class members, they felt free to share more openly than they had ever dared to before.

Guests are usually encouraged to tell a bit about themselves. Whenever possible, professionals are asked how they established themselves as teachers, social workers, doctors, etc. First-hand knowledge can be helpful when students try to choose one of the three hundred or more careers possible for people interested in working with children. Guests can provide a possible link to the job market and can often give particulars useful to students.

Class guests add variety and a vast amount of information to a course. With a minimum of preparation, the guest appearance can be a varied and rewarding learning experience.

Ann Husmann
Psychology Department
El Camino College

For further information, contact the author at 16007 Crenshaw Boulevard, Via Torrance, California 90506.

Call for Papers

How would you like to share your effective teaching ideas and programs that work with 30,000 faculty and administrators in community colleges? *Innovation Abstracts* invites you to submit an article describing your successful teaching practices for possible inclusion in the series. If you're interested, please call or write:

Dr. Karen Watkins, Managing Editor
Innovation Abstracts
The University of Texas at Austin
Education Building 348
Austin, TX 78712

512-471-7545

Managing Editor, Karen Watkins
October 21, 1983, VOL. V, NO. 30

INNOVATION ABSTRACTS is a publication of the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development, EDB 348, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas 78712, (512) 471-7545. Subscriptions are available to nonconsortium members for $35 per year. Funding in part by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education. Issued weekly when classes are in session during fall and spring terms and bimonthly during summer months.

© The University of Texas at Austin, 1983
Further duplication is permitted only by MEMBER institutions for their own personnel